

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 30 September 2014.

Present:

Councillor Elaine Green (Chair)	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair)	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Reverend Thomas Boyle
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Mr Alan Munro

Councillor Green in the Chair

Attending:

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; John Fitzpatrick, Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision); Marie Kelly, Education Senior Manager (Quality Improvement); Mark Ratter, Education Senior Manager (Planning and Reporting); and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending:

Arlene Nunnery, Child Services Co-ordinator (CHCP) (Item 1233 only); and Sarah Pollock, Audit Scotland.

Apologies:

Councillors Tony Buchanan, Danny Devlin, Ian McAlpine, Jim Swift and Vincent Waters; and Ms Mary McIntyre.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1232. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

CARE INSPECTORATE REPORT ON SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE

1233. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing information on the report by the Care Inspectorate on Services for Children and Young People in East Renfrewshire.

Councillor Green expressed her satisfaction at the excellent report which showed that the inspection team had clearly recognised the excellent practices of the joint services in improving the lives of children, young people and families in East Renfrewshire. She highlighted in particular that the inspection had evaluated several aspects of the work of the joint services to be excellent. This was the first time that the excellent grading had been awarded since the current integrated model of inspection was introduced in 2013. To date, twelve inspections of Community Planning Partnerships had been conducted and the report on East Renfrewshire was the best of those published. She went on to explain that it was clear from the report that staff had demonstrated outstanding commitment to improving the lives of children, young people and families within East Renfrewshire. The report highlighted the excellent leadership of partners; exemplary and sector leading joint planning to ensure that high quality services were delivered to children and families; and the exceptional parenting support provided to families. She concluded by expressing the view that the joint services within East Renfrewshire would continue to improve as that was in the best interests of children and families, and congratulated the Director of Education and her team for the contribution made by the Education Department, working in conjunction with other Council services and partners, to the achievement of this outstanding report.

The Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff) explained that an action plan would be prepared by the Integrated Children's Services Core Group to address two areas for improvement which had been identified in the report. These related to the need for joint working between services to improve aspects of their processes of assessment and care planning and to jointly record all initial referral discussions held between staff in social work, health and police when sharing concerns about the safety or wellbeing of young people; and further exploration of the educational outcomes for the 25% of Looked After young people who attended schools outwith East Renfrewshire to ensure that they were provided with similar opportunities to those educated within the authority.

Councillor Fletcher, supported by Councillors Lafferty and Gilbert and Reverend Boyle, offered congratulations to all services and partners involved in the report whilst cautioning against any complacency, explaining that just one case such as that recently highlighted in Renfrewshire which had led to the death of a young child would overshadow all of the excellent work described in the report. It was also noted that further work was required at an operational level to identify children at risk as early as possible in order to put in place the appropriate level of support.

Following further brief discussion, the committee agreed to note the report and the comments made.

INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES PLAN 2013 – 2016 – YEAR 1 PERFORMANCE REPORT

1234. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of the Council on 24 October 2012 (Page 236, Item 236 refers) when the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2013 – 2016 had been approved, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education presenting the Year 1 Performance Report.

Councillor Green explained that the 3 year plan encompassed the vision and strategy of the Integrated Children's Services Planning Core Group for the period 2013 – 2016 and represented East Renfrewshire's long established commitment to achieving better integrated service planning and delivery for children, young people and families. She concluded by

explaining that the plan and the processes which underpinned it had been highly commended in the recent inspection report by the Care Inspectorate as discussed under the previous agenda item.

The Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff) explained that the report set out what had been achieved during 2013/14 and included a set of outcomes in relation to key activities and actions along with the performance of services over time. Performance had been measured in terms of the Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible, Included (SHANARRI) indicators of wellbeing for children and young people. The report highlighted a number of key achievements including improved levels of attendance and low exclusion rates of looked after children; the percentage of pupils reporting that they took part in out-of-class activities and school clubs; 3 year average in SQA national examinations of S4 pupils achieving 5+ awards at Level 5; the number of awards achieved by young people participating in school and community based targeted programmes; and the percentage of parents reporting that the universal Triple P Parenting Programme had met their needs. The report also highlighted three areas where further improvement was required and explained that these would be taken forward by the Integrated Children's Services Planning Core Group. These were identified as the percentage of resident children under 5 years of age who were active library users; the percentage of newborn children exclusively breastfed at 6 – 8 weeks ; and breastfeeding at 6 – 8 weeks in the most deprived Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) data zones. The Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff) concluded by explaining that the Care Inspectorate report discussed earlier in the meeting had confirmed the excellent position within East Renfrewshire.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane, supported by Councillor Lafferty, explain that there was no complacency within East Renfrewshire Council in spite of this excellent report; that the Education Department would always strive to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children and young people; and congratulate the Director of Education and other officers for an excellent report, the committee agreed to note the report.

FUTURE DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION AND RELOCATION OF CALDERWOOD LODGE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS TO WATERFOOT ROAD, NEWTON MEARNS FROM SESSION 2017/18 AND BEYOND

1235. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval to consult on a proposal on the provision of a new denominational (Catholic) primary school and prefive provision in Newton Mearns and the relocation of Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class as part of a faith schools' joint campus should the proposed site at Waterfoot Road be deemed suitable. The proposal would take effect from school session 2017/18. A copy of the formal consultation document and associated information was appended to the report.

The report explained that an informal consultative exercise had been undertaken in late 2013 to explore the possibility and affordability of establishing a joint schools' campus. The results had been reported to the committee in January 2014 noting the positive outcome of the engagement with both communities being in favour of the proposal. It went on to explain that St Cadoc's Primary School was the only Catholic primary school serving the Newton Mearns area. The 3-stream school had high occupancy levels and a number of planned new houses within its catchment area would further increase pressure on places. Projections indicated that the demand for Catholic primary school education in Newton Mearns warranted 4 streams. However the existing school operated on a very busy site and it was not considered a viable option

to extend it any further. A new primary school was required and provision for a site had been included in the proposed Local Development Plan (LDP).

The report continued by explaining that the proposal was to subdivide the current delineated catchment area of St Cadoc's, reduce St Cadoc's to a 2-stream school and establish a new 2-stream Catholic primary school thereby increasing the number of Catholic places by 1 stream as required. Both St Cadoc's and the proposed new school would be associated with St Ninian's High School alongside the current associated primary schools, namely St Joseph's and Our Lady of the Missions. In addition to addressing the sufficiency of Catholic primary places in Newton Mearns, there was a need to provide additional prefive places for the area as well as a need to provide for 600 hours of early learning and childcare for every resident 3 and 4 year old child under the terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It was proposed that the new Catholic primary school would have associated non-denominational prefive provision. A separate statutory consultation would be required in respect of the establishment of a non-denominational nursery class at St Cadoc's which would be facilitated once the school reduced to 2 streams and accommodation could be remodelled.

During the modification process of the proposed LDP, an alternative site for a school at Waterfoot Road had been put forward which afforded the possibility of relocating Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery thereby establishing a faith schools' joint campus. In considering the relocation of Calderwood Lodge to a site within East Renfrewshire and close to its associated secondary school, Mearns Castle High School, it was hoped that this would help sustain and support the Jewish community whose numbers had been decreasing at the school. The campus approach could only be considered at the Waterfoot Road site. Should the Waterfoot Road site be deemed unacceptable as a school site, then a new Catholic primary school with non-denominational prefive provision would be established at Maidenhill in Newton Mearns and Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery would remain at the present location. It was anticipated that the outcome of the consideration of the proposed LDP by The Scottish Government would be known towards the end of 2014.

Provision had been made within the current 8-year Capital Plan for a new Catholic primary school with prefive provision with an additional allocation to allow for the relocation of Calderwood Lodge as part of a campus arrangement. The proposed faith schools' campus would comprise a single building but two schools, each having its own Head Teacher, nursery class and Parent Council. The delineated catchment area of St Ninian's High School would not change under the proposal and the school had sufficient S1 capacity to accommodate the proposed 10 primary streams. Mearns Castle High School would also be unaffected by the proposal and would still be the associated East Renfrewshire secondary school for Calderwood Lodge with existing transfer arrangements continuing as at present. The establishment of the proposed non-denominational nursery class associated with the new Catholic primary school would require the catchment areas of Hazeldene Nursery School and Mearns Primary School Nursery Class to be reviewed to take account of the additional prefive places in the area.

The report concluded by explaining that the proposed consultation period would last from Wednesday 1 October until midnight on Friday 21 November 2014 and that the Director of Education would report the results of the consultation exercise to the meeting of the Education Committee on 5 February 2015.

Dr Angell congratulated the Director on a comprehensive report which clearly showed that the views of the local Jewish community had been taken into account resulting in a positive vision of the way forward. He also explained that there had been an increased intake of

pupils from the Jewish community this academic year than had been the case over the past few years. Similarly, Reverend Boyle welcomed the imminent reduction in pressure on places at St Cadoc's Primary and commended the discussions which had taken place between members of the Jewish and Catholic faiths resulting in strong support for the proposed new joint faith campus.

Councillor Fletcher, supported by Councillor Gilbert, welcomed the proposal which would be beneficial to the entire community of Newton Mearns with the construction of two new schools in the area. He also expressed the view that the proposed campus would help to reduce the recent decline in the Jewish population by sending a clear message to Jewish parents that Calderwood Lodge was a viable alternative to educating their children in the private sector.

Following further brief discussion, in the course of which Mr Munro welcomed the proposal and the opportunities it afforded for current and new teachers within East Renfrewshire, and having heard Councillor O'Kane, supported by Councillor Lafferty, commend the Director for taking a long-term view and planning for future demand for high quality education, the committee agreed to approve that the Director of Education proceeds with a consultation on a proposal, to take effect from school session 2017/18, concerning the provision of a new denominational (Catholic) primary school and prefive provision in Newton Mearns and the relocation of Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class as part of a faith schools' campus should the proposed site at Waterfoot Road be deemed suitable.

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION REPORT ON SCHOOL EDUCATION

1236. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing information on the Education Department's assessment against the recommendations made in the report entitled *School Education* prepared by Audit Scotland on behalf of the Accounts Commission. Copies of the Accounts Commission report and the Education Department's assessment of the current position within East Renfrewshire relative to the recommendations made were appended to the report.

The report outlined the methodology adopted by Audit Scotland in compiling the report which covered all 32 local authorities and highlighted a number of key messages which it contained. These included a total spend of £4.8bn in 2012/13 which was likely to fall in real terms as councils continued to face budgetary pressures and which could lead to increased workload on remaining staff; significant variations in attainment between councils, schools and groups of pupils; the effects of deprivation on levels of attainment and the need to close the gap in performance between schools in order to improve overall attainment levels; and the importance of developing leadership skills and improving teacher quality and systems for monitoring and tracking pupil data. It went on to make a number of recommendations and asked councils to consider their position relative to these.

The thrust of these key messages and recommendations was considered to present no difficulties for the department or for the Council. East Renfrewshire had operated and led developments in some of these areas for a number of years recognising them as being fundamental to its continuous improvement agenda to achieve and attain the best possible outcomes for all learners as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) invited Dr Mark Ratter, Education Senior Manager (Planning and Reporting), to give a short presentation on achievement and attainment in East Renfrewshire highlighting the links to issues raised in the Accounts Commission report.

Dr Ratter outlined the range of attainment measures across the Council's schools highlighting the excellent performance in relation to the national averages and against the Council's comparator authorities. He also highlighted that, in keeping with one of the key messages in the Accounts Commission report, closing the gap in attainment between schools was critical to further improving overall attainment levels and that considerable progress had been made in this regard within East Renfrewshire.

Ms Pollock, Audit Scotland, concluded by commending the Education Department on its use of well-developed and evidence-based performance data in tracking pupil performance and expressed the view that this contributed towards the excellent overall attainment of pupils at all levels within East Renfrewshire.

Councillor Lafferty, supported by Reverend Boyle, congratulated the Director and all staff within the Education Department for the excellent performance in respect of the issues raised in the Accounts Commission report. He expressed the view that the report had provided valuable information to help drive further improvements and that the leadership of the Directorate and its attention to detail had helped raise the expectations of all pupils and parents throughout East Renfrewshire. Councillor Fletcher sought clarification regarding the wide variation in respect of the availability and achievement of extra-curricular awards such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award between schools. The Director, supported by the Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff), explained that the department worked closely with Young Peoples' Services to determine what additional skills were required by pupils and to ensure that, where possible, appropriate resources were made available. The view was expressed that the availability of and participation in after school clubs and extra-curricular activities helped give East Renfrewshire pupils an edge over their peers from other areas. Mr Munro expressed the view that there was some overlap between curricular and extra-curricular activities and that continuing pressure on budgets could further exacerbate this problem. He also expressed the view that the range of extra-curricular activities available in schools was often determined by the skills and interests of individual staff members.

Responding to a comment from Councillor Gilbert encouraging Parent Councils to arrange events such as mock job interviews for pupils, the Director explained that most schools held careers days and maintained information on parents who could offer work experience placements to pupils. She also confirmed, in response to Mr Munro, that at present it was not possible to track the ultimate destinations of former pupils beyond higher or further education but that work was underway, in conjunction with a number of partners, to improve this situation.

Having heard Councillor Green congratulate the Directorate and the Council's partners, including those in the voluntary sector, for their contributions to maintaining East Renfrewshire's position at the forefront of educational attainment in Scotland, the committee agreed to note the report and the actions taken by the Education Department.

CHAIR